

Derek Wallbank, *MinnPost*

WASHINGTON - Most industries have a relevant federal council that acts as a go-between for said industry and the federal government. Not so for nonprofits, despite the fact that they employ about 10 percent of American workers.

That, said Rep. Betty McCollum, means nonprofits are too often late to or left out of key decisions at the federal level.

"As powerful and productive as nonprofit organizations are, their needs are not being addressed by Congress or the Administration. That must change," McCollum said in announcing the measure. "If Congress can work with leaders in the nonprofit and foundation communities we can build a stronger nonprofit sector, craft smarter federal policy, and create more vibrant communities in every state."

McCollum has introduced legislation that aims to create such go-between groups. It would also require the Commerce Department to collect data on nonprofits and establish performance metrics and reporting requirements for them.

"In Minnesota, nonprofits are the heart of the community," said Jon Pratt, executive director of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, which supports her bill. "We are too important to be invisible."

"For too long, government has ignored the nonprofit sector, which employs 10 percent of America's workforce and is often an unrecognized partner in delivering government services."

The key is accessing that data, said Marcia Avner, the Council's public policy director.

"The U.S. collects and reports current economic performance information of nearly every other industry, but we do not know much about the nonprofit sector," Avner said, adding that McCollum's legislation "will finally provide a way for Minnesota to have access to that data and

help both nonprofits and policymakers establish better partnerships to serve local communities."